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ABSTRACT

The Community Adult Education Training Program (CAETP) in the Durban region in South Africa is a nonformal adult education program that was initiated by the Centre for Adult Education at Natal University in recognition of the need to train grassroots educators for the region. Ten women and 10 men are receiving training through the CAETP. Most CAETP participants are in the program to learn to plan, design, and facilitate education. The CAETP project is intended to lay the foundations for a specialized training program to develop community education in areas such as literacy, health, labor, culture, gender politics, and environmental issues. Initially, the learning process and methods of facilitating learning are emphasized. The initial training is then reinforced by ensuing programs that apply the methodological principles to specific subjects (such as health education). CAETP courses are based on participants' identified needs and generally cover the following: the specific dynamics of adult learners in South Africa, basic research methodology and survey procedures, procedures of critical analysis, participatory education methods, planning and organization of educational events, basic communication skills and facilitation of group dynamics, preparation and use of low-cost teaching aids, and evaluation processes and tools. (MN)

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TRAINING GRASSROOTS EDUCATORS
SOME PROVISION OF NONFORMAL ADULT EDUCATION IN THE DURBAN REGION

Introduction

The vast majority of South African adults have no access to further education. In some of the rural areas of the Natal province, the rate of illiteracy reaches 60 percent and unemployment is rampant. Some provision of basic education is offered by non-Government organisations but particularly the non-industrial areas are desperately under-resourced. The civil war of the last five years has caused tremendous homelessness, poverty and devastation and many previously existing infra-structures have been destroyed beyond repair.

It is impossible to give a concise overview of who offers what in adult and non-formal education in the Natal coastal region. A. research study being currently conducted aims at gathering this information in order that a clearer picture of provision and needs can be constructed. This paper focuses on one project in the non-formal education sector: a community adult education training programme, initiated by the Centre for Adult Education at Natal University, as a result of the identified gap in the provision of training for grassroots educators. There are other similar projects in the country and only a broader comparative study could lead to an indepth analysis of such programmes.

The paper argues that one of the first priorities for socio-political and economic transformation must be the creation of a large group of well-equipped educators and trainers, who work towards an upgrading of skills amongst the adult population who fall outside the formal education system.

Grassroots educators

Thembi Khumalo is in her mid-thirties. She is a single mother but her two children live in a rural area with other family members. When she was in her tenth year of schooling economic pressures forced her to leave and seek employment. Like so many other black women there was only one kind of job she could find: that of a domestic worker. Unlike many women in her situation, however, she recognised her exploited position as a woman and a domestic worker, and she joined two organisations: one was a womans' group, the other the union of domestic workers.

Her involvement with union affairs finally led to full-time work as an organiser of domestic workers - a difficult task, and one

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for which she recieved only sporadic payment. Over the years she acquired the necessary organisational and administrative skills on the job, and attended union seminars which she hoped would not only broaden her understanding of economic issues but also equip her with communication and negotiation skills. At the same time she participated actively in campaigns around women's rights and became a prominent member of the ANC Women's League when it was formed last year.

She now works as development officer for a church organisation, and initiates and runs programmes particularly for women and youth in peri-urban communities around Durban. Her job entails activities such as the organisation of seminars on women's health issues, and mobilising youth for participation in discussion and groups and projects. Her employers supported her desire to register for a year-long part-time course in community adult education which she wanted to attend because, as she says "improving my skills will boost my self-confidence and make me more productive in the organisations I am involved in."

On the course with her is a man in his early twenties, Mandla Shezi. Like Thembi he could not complete his schooling and any aspirations for further education were dashed by the poverty of his family. He is employed by an agency which supports literacy groups in specific squatter communities. Mandla has not been taught to run literacy programmes; most of the time he learns by looking over the shoulders of his collegues. His agency is keen that young people like him who did not get much formal education and are therefore not eligible for futher education in formal institutions and courses should still be given the chance to improve their knowledge and skills. Mandla hopes that the course will help him to learn how to work with adults, "especially the class of people with a very low standard of education", so that the community in which he lives and works can be `upgraded'.

With Thembi and Mandla are another 9 women and 10 men who are undergoing `training as trainers'. There is Thandi, who at 46 is one of the oldest members of the class. She has had extensive experience as a health worker and shop keeper. She is now unemployed, a victim of the civil war raging in Natal: she lost everything she ever had and became a refugee living in one of the informal `shack-lands' which are mushrooming around Durban. She hopes that the course will develop her organisational skills and give her the tools for starting self-help and literacy schemes amongst the squatters. And there is Sipho, a shopsteward in charge of education in his branch. His in-house union education has helped him understand things like how to apply for UIF, but he feels ill-equipped to teach this information to other workers.

Margaret, a white woman, is an `odd one out' in this group. She is dissatisfied with the way in which her church organisation is `dispensing help to the needy' by unilaterally building a creche and showing mothers how they should bring up their children. She feels that they are typical of people who, in the words of another trainer "get involved in adult education as `messiahs'

bringing education to the deprived. They can end up working in an extremely disempowering way. Even if their motivation is to 'educate' and not to 'empower' it might not be that effective because it is extremely authoritarian." Margaret is hoping to gain greater insights into the needs articulated by black community educators through working and learning with them, and to gather 'ammunition' against her organisation so that she will be able to challenge them with alternative tools for educating adults towards emancipation and self-sufficiency rather than dependance on 'hand-outs'.

Beyond being participants in the CAETP programme, what do these health-care workers, literacy teachers, youth project workers and trade union education officers have in common?

Firstly, most of these grassroots educators come from a working class or peasant background and their previous formal education was incomplete. This helps them to understand the constituency of people they work with: South Africa's "lost generations" - people who have had little or no access to formal education and who will also in the future be excluded from the formal education system. People who have no appropriate skills for employment, entrepreneurship, self-help schemes or opportunities for further study. People who make up the 'third class' of the unemployed, or semi-skilled labour. Of these, the majority are women who are often further hampered by illiteracy, and increasingly the youth - those children who took to the streets in the seventies and eighties.

The official figure for people falling outside the formal education system is 4 million - in reality this figure must be doubled. Yet there is little provision for adult education from official quarters, funded by state sources. The Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) document, recently put forward makes it clear that as in the past, the Government will not alocate human nor material resources to the provision of adult education and non-formal training in the future. The most glaring omission from the ERS document is any reference to differences in colour, class and gender; still existant unequal educational opportunities are ignored conveniently or at most hinted at with references to 'disadvantaged language groups'. If these differences are not acknowledged they will also not be addressed. Hence, the gross imbalance between skills and training, access to information and basic literacy will not be redressed through Government spending in the near future. Neither those people who are illitate, nor the people who received only a very basic formal education during the era of apartheid's bantu education, political oppression and revolts will benefit educationally from the political changes taking place.

This places an enormous strain on non-formal support systems, service organisations and the industrial and private sector.

Recent initiatives from private enterprise and development agencies are trying to fill some of the gaps. Examples of this are proposed projects such as the Urban Foundations' resource centre in an Inanda squatter camp and the Education Foundation's community `crisis colleges'. However, there are a number of obstacles in the implementation of such projects in the region of Natal, still gripped by political violence and conflicting alliances.

The sponsoring foundations proclaim to be politically non-aligned and wishing to support any members of a community which falls into the catchment area of their centres. They rightly stress the importance that "community colleges should be rooted in the needs of specific, geographically based communities and there should be community involvement right from the start." They acknowledge that "state control, intervention or domination would kill the process and jeopardise legitimacy".

However, as a result of the ongoing civil war, geographic areas in Natal have been clearly identified as either ANC strongholds or Inkatha territory. Access to education and other resources have played a pivotal part in this struggle. The police, army and KwaZulu police force have proved to be not a `neutral peace-keeping' force but rather supportive of the IFP in it's attempts to win or regain some of it's lost ground. Neutrality is thus well-nigh impossible, as the provision to one or the other `side' would be interpreted as political alignment. Furthermore, in many of the most needy communities there are no civil structures from which representatives for community involvement could be democratically elected. Any development of centres or colleges appears to be a problematic undertaking until lasting peace arrangements have been reached and the process of building civil structures is in place.

Most of the participants in the CAETP programme work for non-government organisations which in most cases rely on outside funding for their running expenses. These organisations include service groups which offer information and councelling in health care issues or legal rights, information about alternative housing schemes and skills in agricultural methods and appropriate technology, training in workshop facilitation, negotiation and mediation skills, organisational and meeting skills. These organisations were formed in response to a perceived need or a request from a particular constituency, rather than on the basis of available human and material resources. This meant that personel was not always equipped to fulfill the aims and obectives of the organisation in the most effective and efficient way.

Secondly, participants situate themselves firmly and consciously within the present socio-political changes in South Africa and want to contribute to the transformation of this society to a democratic civil society.

To this end participants all wear many hats: they attend the training course not just as members or employees of their projects or organisations, but they carry their learning through to their civics and community groups, their cultural activities and the political education campaigns, which they organise in their women's groups, local ANC branches or church congregations. This places not only additional demands on the course as a number of 'private' agendas are expected to be met, it also places severe constraints on the time which the course participants can make available to devote to their studies.

Under the State of Emergency and within the context of a fierce civil war, the task of building democratic community structures and forging organisational alliances often fell to the service organisations. In Natal more than elsewhere education and development work has been severely disrupted by political violence, and in the late eighties it became well-nigh impossible to organise and run workshops simply for a lack of safe venues. For many young actvitists an education or training session became a secure context in which they could rest and gather strength for the next onslaught - rather than a process of engaging in reflection and learning. On the other hand hide-outs in the bush became 'schools' as comrades became teachers who ran civil awareness-raising and political conscientisation campaigns.

The political changes since February 1990 have placed further strains on educator-activists in service organisations as they had to take on the extra load of facilitating or directly providing political education to meet the demands and challenges of their constituencies. As one woman civil rights campaigner put it: "now that women will have a vote they are concerned with learning about the process of exercising it".

More recently community and service organisations have had to reassess their roles, and in many cases shift gear from the mobilisation of communities to the provision of services and education in view of a future civil society. At this stage the gaps in administrative and educational skills became very clear.

Participants' thirst for information and skills is enormous, and on the whole their motivation high. They share a desire for learning, not soley for the purposes of self-advancement but because they are active members of organisations and projects which work for change and development in South Africa. They are expected to pass on what they have learnt to their constituencies, and this accountability is taken very seriously.

Thirdly, participants are on the course in order to learn methodologies of planning, design and facilitation of education. Interviews conducted with adult educators / trainers show that very few of them have had any formal training at all: they learnt to educate / teach by doing it, trial and error fashion. In most cases they began with what they knew best, from their own experience. Hence they based their work on the authoritarian models to which they were accustomed from their formal learning

experiences. In a frontal classroom setting they became the teacher figure and dispensed knowledge. Clearly, the form of interaction contradicted the contents of their teaching and they tried to infuse their own teaching with participatory activities: they organised learners into groups and asked them to discuss problems and issues, they conducted some sort of needs assessment and attempted to use more appropriate materials.

While most of the educators I interviewed and worked with have acquired subject-specific knowledge and developed a fount of useful information and insights over time, their potential as trainers has not been realised. The distinction between the content and the process of learning was often unclear, and rather than following the mechanics of critical analysis much of their diagnosis has been intuitive, based on first-hand experience.

In some cases trainers were lucky and worked in a supportive critical environment in which all the staff provided ongoing assessment and evaluation of their work and cooperated in the development of materials. As one trainer described it:
"I worked in a collective environment with a particular political motivation. Both were pressures to operate in a more democratic way. This militated against working in a non-participatory authoritarian way."

Increasingly, then, these educators have come to confront the limitations of their teaching skills and lack of coherent methodology and have requested training. As one said: "My experience with education was purely formal. I would like training to help me break out of particular patterns. It would be nice to have inspiration on how to do things more creatively. We need prodding to think and try new things".

It is ironic that schoolteachers are expected to complete training courses of at least 2-3 years; adult and basic educators and development workers however are expected to know (intuitively?) what to do without the knowledge of any methodological or pedagogical tools. The assumption is that if one can read and write one must be able to teach others how to become literate; if one knows a lot about health one must be able to provide health education; if one is a musician or an actor clearly one can teach others how to do make music and act, and so on.

In many instances people are elected or employed as education officers on the strength of their organisational and leadership ability and standing. But as much as one would not expect an exceptional goal-keeper to be just as brilliant playing attack, one should not expect that training skills are an automatic asset of an organiser. Often the leadership and employees of both community structures and service organisations lack the appropriate educational and methodological tools to provide training to constituencies which have only a basic previous experience of formal schooling but a whealth of skills which have enabled them to survive poverty, oppression and hardship. Clearly

this leads to frustration both of the educators and the learners.. As one development worker lamented: "Simply learning by experience can take a long time. During that period you can use up a lot of trainees' patience and their interest in learning".

The greatest obstacle to the efficient and productive running of community colleges and other non-formal projects and education centres is the desperate shortage of skilled educators and trainers. The CAETP is a small step towards filling this gap. What are its aims and curriculum?

The Community Adult Education Training Programme

Initially, the Centre for Adult Education offered a number of short courses and workshops on training methodology and educational design strategies. It soon became apparant however, that the poor educational background of learners on the one hand, and the demands of their daily involvement in community organisations on the other, did not enable them to learn as much in those training sessions as desirable. If they were to change their practices to employ a more participatory teaching methodology they needed practice and quality time: in order to fully understand and apply a methodology participants had to be given choices and a chance to critically reflect on the rationale behind their choices. For this a more comprehensive training process had to be devised.

The CAETP commits itself to consciously working in a way that encourages self-reliance of the learners. Thus, it deliberately counteracts initiatives which provide people with materials without giving them the means and ability to use those materials.

It is important that the previous experience and the considerable survival skills which the learners bring to bear on the project are recognised and incorporated into the course programmes. The motivation for learners' active engagement and participation in the design and running of the projects' courses and workshops is the recognition that the South African socio-political and economic context has had a strong demotivating and disempowering effect on people. By involving learners fully they begin to own both the content and the process of their learning.

Broadly, the aims of the project are as follows:
Firstly, to develop Zulu speaking trainers' capacity as community adult educators and programme developers. The language component is important as learners, particularly of more rural projects, are often not conversant in English. Participants in project programmes have in most cases been mandated by their organisations and communities to attend the training. In return for study-time off and payment of fees they are fully accountable to their constituencies. The programme supports this accountability, and sessions are designed is such a way, that learning can be tested and applied in the field directly after each contact session.

Provision is made for an equal representation on courses and workshops of women and men. There is a particular need to encourage the educational development of women and to prepare them for positions of leadership.

Secondly, the project aims to equip participants with methodological skills which will enable them to train others working within similar educational development projects. Given the large scale of training needs and the comparatively small base of people who can provide such training, it is crucial that the training has a multiplier effect. The slogan of 'each one teach one' aptly applies here.

Thirdly, the project will lay the foundations for a specialised training programme which will develop community education in areas such as literacy, health, labour, culture, gender, politics, environmental issues. In the general programme of workshops and courses learners participate irrespective of their subject specificity. The emphasis of the educating educators project is on the learning process and methods of facilitation and participants are invited to test their learning in their particular field of activities.

However, the initial training has to be supported and reinforced by ensuing programmes which seek to apply the methodological principles to specific subjects. Thus, community health workers are offered follow-up training programmes in health education; cultural officers learn how to use the participatory method in creative writing, dramatic improvisations etc.

Fourthly, the project engages in the development and production of training materials. It is recognised that no training manual or instructors' workbook can substitute for actual face to face training. However, written material on the use of techniques and examples of educational designs will assist educators and trainers in their subsequent training programmes.

In accordance with the identified needs of the participants the curriculum of the programme covers the following broad categories:

* the specific dynamics of adult learners in South Africa
* basic research methodology and survey procedures
* procedures for critical analysis
* methods of participatory education
* planning, organising and designing educational events
* basic communication skills and facilitation of group dynamics
* preparation and use of low-cost teaching aids
* processes and tools of evaluation.

Since participants' learning experiences are based almost exclusively on previous formal schooling they arrive with fixed expectations of the learning transaction on the programme and often suffer from low self-confidence. When their expectations

are frustrated by a participatory experiental approach initially they often react with shock and confusion. However, learners soon appreciate the fact that their rich and varied working life and survival skills are recognised as important, are validated and used as a source of further learning. As a past course participant said: "I liked the emphasis on the process in which the students contributed to what was happening."

The curriculum is not constructed in isolation from the communities of learners and trainers - both those who participate directly in the CAETP and those who are in turn educated by the participants. Rather, it is designed in direct consultation with past and present participants. For this reason the rootedness of participants in communities and organisations is crucial: they are accountable to the constituencies they serve and their learning informs and is informed by those whom they serve.

However, the process of ongoing consultation and and collective course construction does not automatically ensure that certain repressive structures are not reproduced. A new syllabus clearly does not make a new 'popular education', even if it includes subjects like `contextual studies'. The process of facilitating learning and skills acquisition has to match the `new' contents. A critical consciousness can only be achieved if learners are given the tools with which to conduct their own analyses and investigations. Only when the educators of educators employ instructional methods in such a way that the process of teaching and learning is constantly reflected, and only when they are given adequate chances to test and use the methods they have acquired can a truly democratic process of `educating the educators and training the trainers' be achieved.

Isolation and the search for models

Much of this work is being done in isolation not just from other similar initiatives in the country but from other non-formal education systems elsewhere in the world. Other developing countries undergoing socio-economic and political change must be confronted by similar problems: who provides the training models for progressive teacher education in a transformed society? How can systems be transformed if educators from the old mould train the new ones? Clearly, there is no single recipe applicable for all cultural contexts, but comparative discussions would help us to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of our programme.